THE CHRIST CHURCH STORY

A congregational history of Christ Lutheran Church
on the occasion of its

100th ANNIVERSARY

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Grateful acknowledgment should be given to the following for their contributions to this history:

- Gloria Paar, who several years ago completed the extensive and thorough research which made the writing of this history possible;
- Ronald Thomas, who updated the research and wrote and edited this historical account;
- Members and friends of the congregation, who donated to the Centennial Committee pictures and printed material regarding the history of Christ Church.

Christ Lutheran Church

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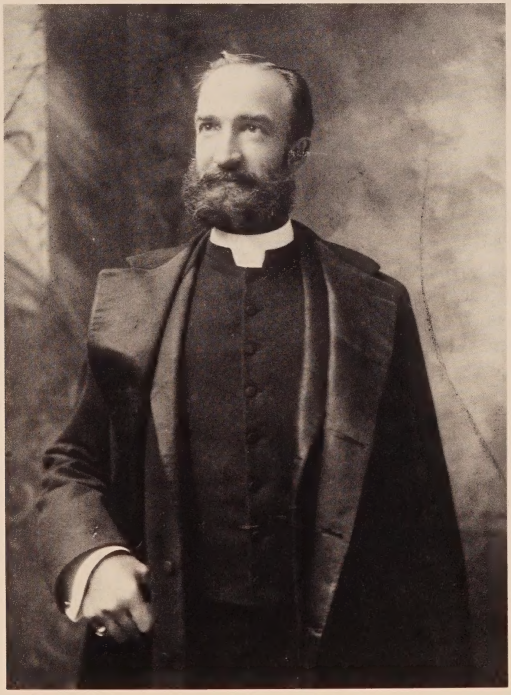
As we think about the congregation and facilities of Christ Lutheran Church in 1987 and consider the beautiful sanctuary, the spacious parish building, the healing ministry at the Deaton Hospital and Medical Center, and the many-faceted services to the elderly at the Christ Church Harbor Apartments, we can only speculate about the thoughts of those attending the first services of Christ Church in South Baltimore's Triumph Hall on December 18, 1887.

We do know that events had moved very swiftly to prepare for this fateful event. Just two and a half weeks before, a young pastor named Leander M. Zimmerman, born in Manchester, Maryland, and having been ordained for only two months, had arrived in the area at the call of the Board of Home Missions of the General Synod of the Lutheran Church. The synod had established the Lutheran Church Extension Society of Baltimore City to plan strategic locations for new congregations and assist struggling parishes.

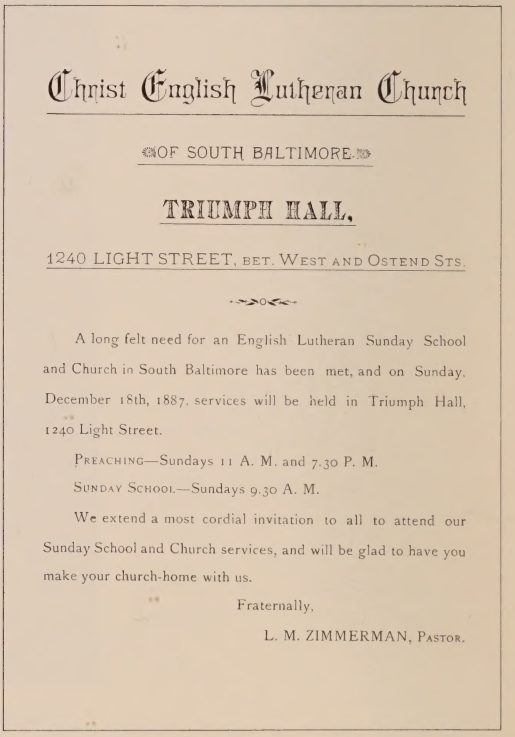


Pastor Leander M. Zimmerman early in his ministry at Christ Church

In the late nineteenth century, there were at least three German-speaking Lutheran congregations in South Baltimore. These churches had attracted the many German immigrants who had poured into this port city in the late 1800s and who had remained to live where they had debarked. For a while, the immigrants felt comfortable with the continued use of the German language in worship and of the old-world church traditions. As habits and life styles changed, however, and the immigrants and their children learned English, there was a desire for a church using the new language.

Upon his arrival, Pastor Zimmerman immediately began an extensive canvass of the neighborhood, encouraging individuals and families to become a part of the new venture. The Mission Board had rented Triumph Hall at 1240 Light Street near Ostend Street for $20.00 per month including heat and utilities, arranged for chairs to be provided free of charge by a doctor who used the hall during the week for his practice, and allocated $100 for other necessities required for the initial work.

The first official community meeting to discuss the organization of the Sunday School was held by Pastor Zimmerman in the home of Charles G. Kriel, 5 West Henrietta Street, on December 13, 1887. A few days later, on December 18, the first session of the Sunday School and the first morning and evening services were held. It was a cold and snowy Sunday. The temperature was at zero. A local newspaper noted, "A snowstorm has made the streets of the city well-nigh impassable except for the lightest kind of sleigh."



Christ English Lutheran Church

OF SOUTH BALTIMORE.

TRIUMPH HALL,

1240 LIGHT STREET, BET. WEST AND OSTEND STS.

A long felt need for an English Lutheran Sunday School and Church in South Baltimore has been met, and on Sunday, December 18th, 1887, services will be held in Triumph Hall, 1240 Light Street.

PREACHING—Sundays 11 A. M. and 7.30 P. M.

SUNDAY SCHOOL—Sundays 9.30 A. M.

We extend a most cordial invitation to all to attend our Sunday School and Church services, and will be glad to have you make your church-home with us.

Fraternally,

L. M. ZIMMERMAN, PASTOR.

The first invitation

Yet on this cold, wintry day, 96 people were present at Sunday School, 150 at the morning worship, and 115 at the evening service. Even on the first Sunday, many of the congregation had come from the adjoining counties and, what was for that time, the most remote sections of the suburbs. Because of an error by the caretaker of this old-fashioned, red brick hall, the first worship service of Christ Lutheran Church was interrupted by a troupe of Indians from a Wild West show, to whom the building had been rented for the week as a shelter. Not even this incident, however, could dampen the spirit of that faithful band of Christians. Writing about the early days, Dr. Zimmerman said:

> *"Our greatest purpose is not to have an imposing church building nor the accumulation of worldly gains, but to glorify God in the salvation of souls for His kingdom. We would as a congregation, therefore, not only work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, but in God's hands be an agency for the spiritual leavening of the world so far as it lies within our power. With the Master we would go forth and make disciples of all nations, whether it be the foreigner abroad or the man in our own country just across the street or around the corner..."*

During the next two months, the diligent pastor made more than 600 neighborhood visits. The result of his efforts was the formal organization of Christ English Evangelical Lutheran Church on Sunday, February 5, 1888. The congregation had a charter membership of almost 220 people, about 150 received by confirmation or renewal of faith and 70 joining from neighboring churches. Within two weeks, 35 more people had united with the congregation. The records of March 3 showed an additional gain of 30, and 75 more members joined on April 1, bringing the total membership to around 360 in just four short months.

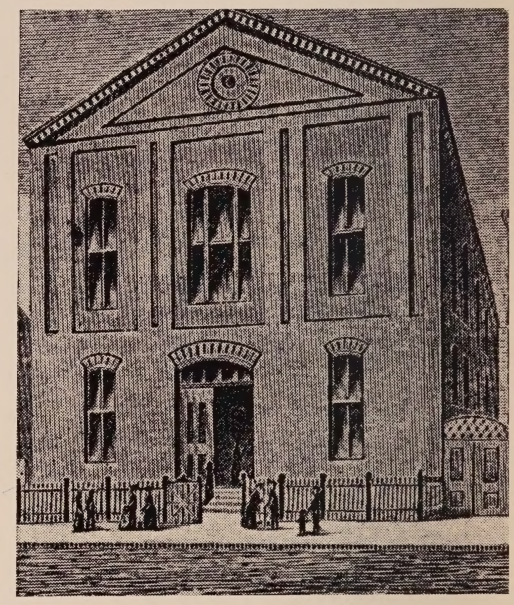
Clearly, Triumph Hall was becoming too small for this growing band of believers, so a search was started for a permanent place of worship. After much negotiation, the New Sailors' City Bethel Methodist Episcopal Church on Hill Street near Charles, one of the oldest Methodist houses of worship in the city, was purchased for $8,000. The history of the congregation formerly occupying the site had concluded, "We are leaving this building because there is no future here."

The members of the new congregation of Christ Church, however, saw a great future at this location. After a general renovation, including a new roof, walls, carpeting, and pulpit furniture, as well as the purchase of the building adjoining the church to house the Sunday School, the first service in the new building was conducted on August 12, 1888. The dedication service was held on November 25, 1888, and one week later, the congregation voted to make the church self-sustaining. Thus, just one year after Dr. Zimmerman's work began in the South Baltimore area, the newly-organized congregation became self-supporting, relieving the Mission Board of the need for further assistance.

During the first years of its existence, several customs and organizations started at Christ Church which would continue for many decades. The Ladies' Aid Society, organized early in 1888, held a bazaar for five days in October and realized a profit of $1,200. This money was used for the renovation of the newly-purchased building. Christmas entertainments were held, and the custom of using the Thank Offering for benevolent causes also began at this time.

At the second Christmas celebration, the pastor presented the congregation a musical six-foot Christmas tree made in Germany. Although many of the branches are now bare, the tree is still trimmed and on display at the church each Christmas season.

Early in the church's history, Wednesday evening prayer meetings were started, regular Sunday School faculty meetings were held every other week, and a catechism class was instituted. A Deaconess Society was organized with seven women set apart as parish sisters. Not only did they care for the altar and visit the sick and troubled, but they also directed a daily Christian kindergarten during the school year. This group, the forerunner of what was later called the Altar Guild, was the first Parish Deaconess Society in any Baltimore Lutheran church and among the first in the country.



Exterior of church, 1888-1894

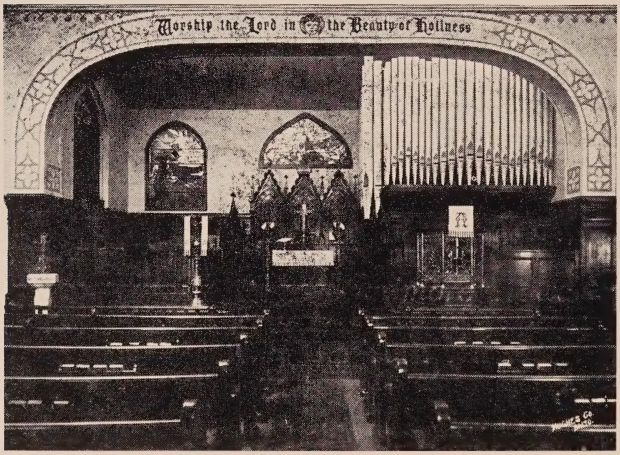
To keep the people informed about the many activities of the busy parish, a four-sided pamphlet entitled *The Pastor's Indicator* (later revised and renamed *The Christ Church Visitor* and then *Harbor Lights*) was published beginning in 1895. An early issue contained the announcement of a Sunday School excursion to Bay Ridge Beach on July 20, 1893, with the promise of free ice cream for all (a custom which would continue for more than 85 years).

Church outing, July 1897

Meanwhile, church attendance and giving continued to grow. "Jubilee Day" was celebrated in January, 1892, marking the church's freedom from all indebtedness. By 1894, the membership numbered 915 people. During the first six years of his ministry, Dr. Zimmerman had baptized 455 children, married 176 couples, conducted 212 funerals, and made 11,000 pastoral visits. It was said that this pastor wore out more shoe leather than any other minister in Baltimore.

With more and more people attending Christ Church, changes had to be made in the physical plant. The Infant Department's Sunday School room was enlarged, a house on Hill Street was purchased for the sexton, and the exterior appearance of the church was altered. A metal cornice was hung, and the windows restyled in the Gothic design. The chancel was relocated, and more seating was acquired by extending the nave and balcony.

The first public-address system in the city was installed so that worshipers in the lecture room could hear the service even though they could not see it. In this way, it was possible for more than 2,000 members and friends to unite in a single worship service. Later improvements added trim to the exterior church walls and put a fence between the lecture room and the blacksmith shop next door. Within a few years after these improvements, Christ Church was again debt-free.

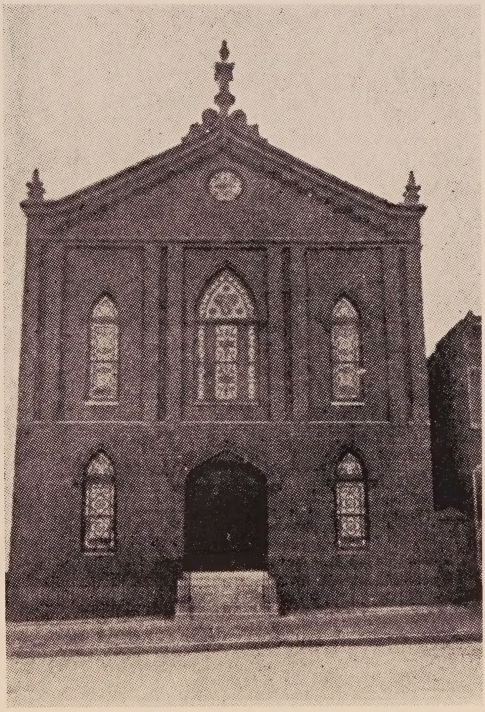


Early chancel of church

Various organizations were formed during the pastorate of Dr. Zimmerman. The Men's Bowling League was organized in 1903 and, although recently combined with the ladies' league, is still active today, making it the oldest continuous church bowling league in Baltimore. In fact, the league is older than duckpin bowling itself. It was first organized as a tenpin group, then changed to duckpins when the small pins came into use in 1906. Youth groups called the Junior and Senior Christian Endeavor Societies were formed in 1904, and organizations such as the Ladies' Guild, Men's League, Ladies' Visiting Committee, and Sunday School Visiting Committee worked on various projects and activities at the direction of the pastor.

By the congregation's twentieth anniversary in 1907, attendance on Sunday averaged 717, and there were 225 on the Sunday School roll. In an anniversary tribute to the congregation, Dr. Zimmerman spoke about the faithful attendance, noting that "rare was there an empty pew during church services, with even the Wednesday night prayer service having large gatherings." By 1925, Christ Church had grown so much that it had the largest communicant membership of any Lutheran church in Baltimore City — 2,000. "Every seat free — Everybody welcome." These words, printed on announcement cards and on the sidewalk signboard, typified the way visitors were greeted and welcomed into the Christ Church fellowship.

Many newspaper articles over the years gave glowing tribute to Christ Church. On July 17, 1915, a whole page of pictures in a Baltimore paper showed a group of 2,000 members gathered in Druid Hill Park for a Sunday School picnic. From early morning through twilight, the members consumed seven bushels of peanuts, 1,200 blocks of ice cream, and 50 pounds of candy. A 1918 *Evening Sun* article, "A Church Downtown Doing Work All Around," stated that the purpose of Christ Church was "to be as great a blessing as possible to as many people as possible, as long as possible."



Exterior of church, 1894-1919

In the work of the congregation, Dr. Zimmerman had excellent help in such consecrated deaconesses as Sister Carrie Taylor, who served faithfully for 40 years beginning in 1901, and Sister Bertha Schwanewede, who worked on the church staff from 1921 to 1929. The first ministerial son of the congregation, the Rev. Arthur C. Waldkoenig, was ordained during the last few years of Dr. Zimmerman's active pastorate.

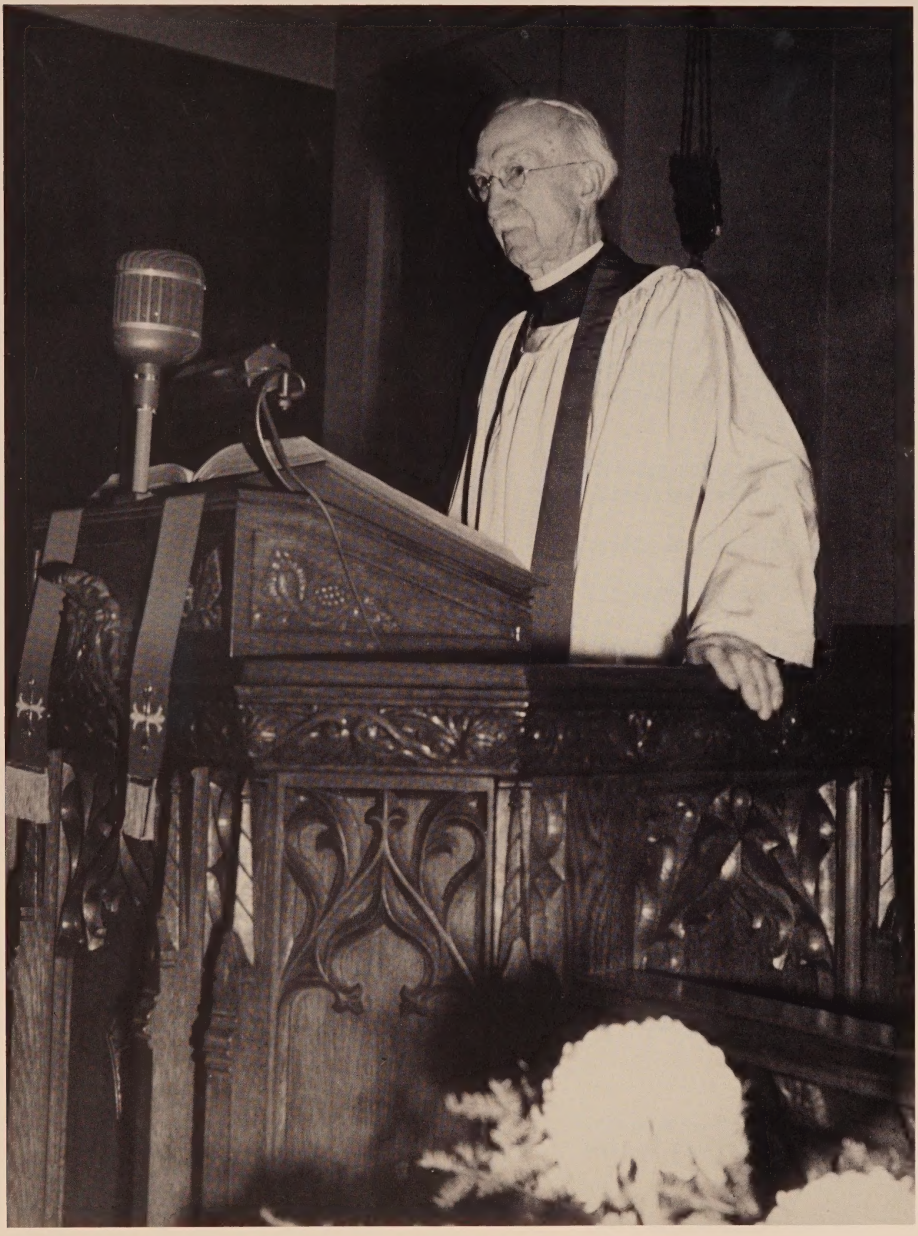
During the winter of 1925, Dr. Zimmerman, who had been in frail health for some time, finally yielded to his doctor's advice and agreed to give up the active ministry. On April 19, 1925, devoted parishioners crowded the nave, balconies, and Sunday School rooms to pay tribute to the "Daddy Pastor" (as he often referred to himself) and to hear his final sermon after 38 years as pastor.

As a church leader, Dr. Zimmerman understood the power of publicity and was far ahead of his time in the use of promotional methods, such as publishing booklets containing dates and times of services and sermon topics. He encouraged people to attend worship by sending personal cards to members or by distributing buttons, often with his own picture or that of the church on them. For example, on one card sent to a member living outside South Baltimore, he wrote, "You have such a long distance to come, but I rejoice that distance has thus far been no barrier to you."

He was a prolific writer, publishing love stories, prose works, and many booklets of verses, his best known and most quoted poem being "Roses Will Bloom Again." Although space will not permit a complete listing of his works, *Mellow Fruits of Experience*, *Prayers*, and *The Preacher's Doorknob* were among his most popular.

Dr. Zimmerman was always an example to the people of the church and the community. While making his rounds, he carried a pocketful of candy to give to neighborhood children, and often after his visits, he would be seen leaving a member's house carrying food or clothing to give to another along the way in greater need. Some have said that seeing Dr. Zimmerman in the pulpit and hearing him preach reminded one of God himself appearing on earth.

Tall, thin, with brown eyes, wavy brown hair, a heavy moustache and beard (which, he confessed, he wore to make himself look older), and a quick, rather high-pitched voice, Dr. Zimmerman was described in a 1910 newspaper article as never at a loss for a word. "Energy is the chief impression that you gain at first glimpse of the Rev. Dr. Zimmerman. It beams out of him — out of his eyes, out of his gestures, out of his words." Commenting on his remaining a bachelor, he told the paper that, "I am a bachelor, yet married. The church is my bride, and the entire congregation of Christ Church my children."



Dr. Zimmerman preaching on Thanksgiving Day, 1949

In addition to the work in his own parish, Dr. Zimmerman was President of the Maryland Synod in 1900, President of the Board of the Lutheran Deaconess Motherhouse for many years, Vice President of the Board of Home Missions, and for more than 25 years a member of the Board of Trustees of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. In spite of several major operations, he continued to serve the church for 25 more years after his retirement, preaching every Christmas, Easter, and Thanksgiving. On March 10, 1952, in his 92nd year, this pastor who had served no other parish entered the Church Triumphant.

The following descriptions are typical of the esteem in which Dr. Zimmerman was held:

"Baltimore's greatest pastor for a generation."
The Lutheran, May 7, 1925

"Nobody thought of South Baltimore without thinking of the Rev. Dr. Zimmerman. He was part of the local scene. Thousands of Baltimoreans who were not members of his church were awakened to nostalgic memories at the mere mention of his name."
Baltimore Sun, March 10, 1952

"Through his kindly nature and his consideration, he extended his influence far beyond the limits of his parish. Not the least of his contributions to the community was the example he gave it of a Christian life."
Baltimore Sun, March 11, 1952

"He was very kind and softspoken."

"A wonderful pastor."

"He served the church and its members 100% with his time and ability which were tremendous."

"...He was a friend to all people of every color."

"Dr. Zimmerman inspired Christian service among everyone he knew."
Members of Christ Church, 1987

When Dr. Zimmerman retired, Christ Church was faced with its first major crisis. Some felt that with his dynamic personality and leadership gone, Christ Church would decline or even die. None of these dire predictions, however, came true. On September 1, 1925, the Rev. Oscar F. Blackwelder, a native of Newberry, South Carolina, began his work as the congregation's second pastor.

Dr. Oscar F. Blackwelder

It was during his era that a regular church staff was organized. Dr. Zimmerman had no assistant pastors or secretarial help except for the Rev. Albert 0. Mullen, who worked with Dr. Zimmerman briefly from 1913-14. Miss Dora Lingle was, therefore, hired as the first church secretary in 1925, and regular office hours were established. An assistant pastor, the Rev. Hugh J. Rhyne, was called in 1926 to organize programs for young people and assume the responsibilities of Olga Linsenmeyer, who had been Director of Youth Work for the preceding year. Under Pastor Rhyne's leadership, a weekly children's church service was begun in the lecture room with as many as 485 young people in attendance by 1928. Church music was directed by Charles Sherman (1923-1928) and Clifton Andrews (1928-1936).

The Christ Church Luther League was organized in 1925. Attendance grew rapidly to almost 600 members, making this the largest young people's society in the United Lutheran Church. This distinction was partly due to the congregation's rather liberal interpretation of a "young people's" group. There were several divisions in the Christ Church organization, with one being "seniors" (anyone over 21). Christ Church, therefore, had Luther Leaguers well up in years!

Beginning in 1925, the Primary, Junior, and Senior Departments of the Sunday School and the Business and Professional Women's Class were created. To meet the needs of parents, infants, and shut-ins, the Cradle Roll and Home Department were also started. An additional house next to the church was purchased, and another nearby home was rented to accommodate the Bible School's more than 1,000 pupils. Some members can still remember vividly the crowded conditions in the Sunday School classes held in the small rooms of the Hill Street homes.

Holidays have always been special times at Christ Church. The Christmas Day celebration began with a 6:00 a.m. service, with many members boarding streetcars by 4:00 a.m. in order to arrive on time. Those who entered the church after 5:00 or 5:30 a.m. had to stand in the back because of a lack of seats. New Year's Eve watchnight services were also held for many years. Special Holy Week services, including confirmation on Tuesday, a preparatory service on Wednesday, a service of Holy Communion on Thursday, and the traditional three-hour service on Good Friday were always highlights of the year.

During the twenties and early thirties, weekly attendance at the 11:00 a.m. worship averaged more than 1,100 with several hundred juniors, intermediates, and teens attending a children's service at the same time. To instill a feeling of unity, the doxology, benediction, and last hymn were amplified so that all participants, including the young people, could join together. To accommodate the large crowds, the United Railways Company (forerunner of the M.T.A.) sent a special streetcar to Charles and Hill Streets on Sunday mornings at 12:15 p.m., and the Church Council hired an automobile club official to take charge of parking arrangements for cars. As his fame as an eloquent preacher spread, Dr. Blackwelder was asked to broadcast the weekly "Y.M.C.A. Pulpit" and "The Lighted Window" radio programs.

Exterior of church, 1919-1955

Other activities begun at this time included a daily Vacation Bible School, the Ladies' Exchange (a store at the church operated by the Ladies' Society), a men's soccer team, Boy Scout Troop #60, and the Ladies' Bowling League. Another integral part of the church program was an afternoon church school on Wednesday after regular school hours for children of members and those of the surrounding community. To provide recreational as well as religious reading material, a church library was formed, staffed by eight librarians. In 1935, the library became a station of the Enoch Pratt Free Library system of Baltimore City.

The Sunday School picnic and family excursions sponsored by the Ladies' Society were annual events anticipated by church members and friends. In the late twenties, these were held at Carlin's or Druid Hill Parks and always featured baseball games, relay races, contests, and peanut scrambles. Later, Tolchester Beach became the site as the "Louise," the "Emma Giles," the "Bear Mountain," and the "Bay Belle" sailed down the Chesapeake Bay with more than 1,000 Christ Church people on board.

Pastor Blackwelder brought a youthful enthusiasm to Christ Church that was contagious, and it was not long into his ministry that he realized the need for a new church building if the work of the congregation was to continue at full effectiveness. There were common complaints about inadequate rest rooms, poor fire protection, the pews being too close together, a lack of seating to accommodate the congregation, and the great expense of keeping the old church plant in good repair. There was a proposal that Christ Church consolidate with Zion Lutheran Church and move into the downtown area. Many, however, resisted the idea of leaving the South Baltimore location, believing, instead, that God had put the congregation on Hill Street and wanted His work to go on in this community. In 1928, therefore, the congregation voted to start a building fund, and even though its growth was seriously handicapped by the Depression, about $70,000 was raised. These funds were later applied toward the erection of the parish house.

During Dr. Blackwelder's ministry at Christ Church, the Rev. Carroll S. Klug, the second ministerial son of the congregation, was ordained, and two additional young men entered college and seminary at Gettysburg to prepare for the ministry, Mr. Howard O. Walker and Mr. Augustus Hackmann. After the resignation of Assistant Pastor Rhyne, Mary Propst assumed the responsibilities of youth work and parish visitation for three-and-a-half years. In May of 1930, the Rev. Roy L. Sloop accepted the church's call as its assistant pastor. This man of God was to serve the congregation in this position for seven years.

After eight years as pastor, Dr. Blackwelder resigned in 1933 to accept a call in Washington, D.C. In December of the same year, Dr. John L. Deaton, a native of Hickory, North Carolina, who had served parishes in Pennsylvania, was unanimously called to become the third pastor, a post he would hold for almost 27 years.

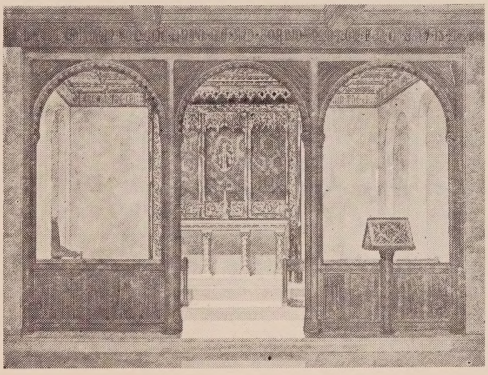
Because of crowded conditions in the Sunday School (classes were being held in the sanctuary, the lecture room, and in two houses on Hill Street), the new pastor almost immediately instituted a capital funds appeal to add to the money already collected so that a new Sunday School building could be built. The congregation responded faithfully, and the new Parish House was dedicated with special celebratory services on June 14, 1936. The addition included a hall with a seating capacity of over 700, 22 individual classrooms, and a large kitchen. The rear of the hall had an overflow which was connected to the church by folding doors, allowing full view of the chancel and adding 50% seating capacity to the church. Each department of the Sunday School had its own assembly area, and each class a private room for instruction. The Fellowship Hall was also large enough to seat the entire Church School and was perfect for entertainments and receptions.

Church and Zimmerman Parish House, 1936-1955

Directly under the Fellowship Hall was what was called in the dedication program the "most beautiful children's chapel in any Lutheran church in America." The Parish House, which also included a church parlor and administrative offices, was dedicated in honor of Dr. Zimmerman, whose bas-relief with the words "Friend, Counselor, Author" is on the back wall of the foyer.

A year after its dedication, the Fellowship Hall served as the center of worship during the renovation of the old church. As a part of this redecoration, a beautiful new stone altar was installed, and the pulpit, lectern, communion rail, and choir stalls were rearranged. The organ was rebuilt, old lighting fixtures were replaced, and the nave was redesigned. Most of the chancel equipment was paid for through memorials and special gifts from the people. Four years after the new facility was dedicated, all debts were cleared and the mortgage was burned.

Over the years, services at Christ Church regularly attracted large crowds. As a part of the fiftieth anniversary celebration in 1937, more than 5,000 people participated in several services held on Anniversary Sunday. On Easter, 1948, 2,300 members attended the 11:00 a.m. service. Many still remember how the church was filled to capacity on many Sundays, with people sitting on the floor, the rear steps of the balcony, and all the way back to and on the stage of the Fellowship Hall. A note in the bulletin asked people politely not to put their feet on the church walls while leaning against them during worship!



Chancel of Children's Chapel

Church chancel after renovations of late 1930s

During Dr. Deaton's tenure, a longer period of confirmation instruction was instituted and an Altar Guild organized. The Crusaders, a group of ten laymen, began regular visits to members. The Adult Choir grew, and Junior, Intermediate, High School, and Young Adult Choirs were formed and grew under the leadership of Edith Elgar Sackett, Albert Ruppel, Thelma Viol, James Mitchell, William Chalmers, and Mary Moyer. In all, over 175 people were members of a church musical group, with a Junior Choir of about 70 participants, making it the largest in the city and receiving superior ratings in contests at the Peabody Institute. To enhance communication with the far-reaching congregation, a newsletter, *The Christ Church Visitor,* began a weekly publishing schedule in 1936.

Juanita Horton, Doris Boylan, and Alice Botthof served as either full or part-time office secretaries following the death of Miss Lingle in 1944. In November of 1948, Miss Eva Zumbrun became church secretary, a position she held faithfully for 33 years, making her one of the most knowledgeable persons concerning the life and work of the congregation.

New social and religious activities began to meet the ever-growing needs of the people. A mother's club flourished in the 1930s, and the Young Women's Missionary Society was started to study and support the evangelism enterprise of the Lutheran church around the world. In 1956, this group changed its name to the United Lutheran Church Women. Church suppers were conducted in the Fellowship Hall several times a year, with almost 2,500 people regularly served at oyster and sour beef dinners held on two nights each November. May Festivals as well as Father-and-Son and Mother-and-Daughter Banquets became activities eagerly awaited each year by many members and friends.

One of the several church choirs of the 1930s

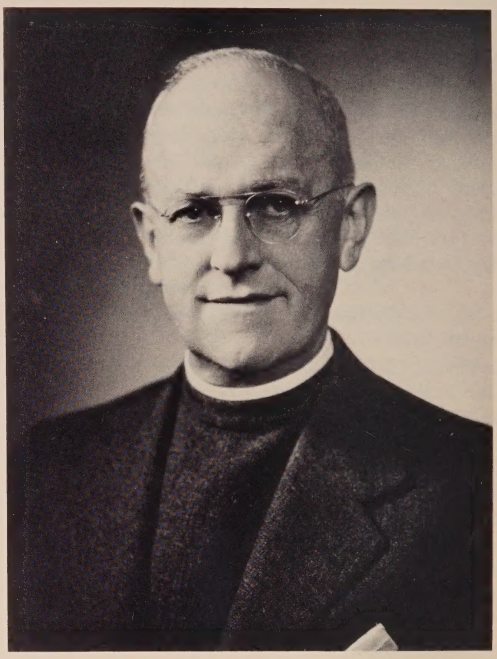
Separate services were conducted for children in the chapel each Sunday morning at 11:00 a.m. with a full children's choir participating. There were also special children's services on Thanksgiving and Good Friday and other youth-oriented activities, such as Vacation Bible School scheduled for two weeks each summer. In the 1940s and 1950s, Sunday School picnics were held at Tolchester Beach, Gwynn Oak Park, Bay Shore Park, Beverly Beach, Mago Vista Beach, and Bay Ridge Beach.

In 1937, the Rev. Howard O. Walker became assistant pastor, the first of three ministerial sons to return to their home church as pastors. Other assistant pastors working with real dedication during this busy time for Christ Church were the Rev. Rodger M. Singer (1941-1945), the Rev. Howard O. Baily (1945-1950), the Rev. William Rappold (1951-1952), and the Rev. Donald W. Sanner (1953-1955). Between 1938 and 1961, Christ Church was blessed with two deaconesses, Sister Vernetta Kunkel (1938-1945) and Sister Janet Coiner (1945-1961). Mrs. Edna White worked as a parish visitor and office assistant from 1947 until 1960. Also, Mrs. Marie Boylan was a part-time Sunday School visitor and Mrs. Edith Jones an office assistant in the fifties and sixties. All of these individuals served with distinction, giving untiring and devoted service to the congregation.

Eight more young men from the parish entered the Lutheran ministry in this period: Lawrence D. Folkemer and Carl W. Folkemer (1940), W. Leigh Bell and Gordon E. Folkemer (1944), C. Edgar Koehnlein (1949), Donald R. Gallion (1951), L. Crosby Deaton (1953), and Barron B. Maberry (1958). Pastor Crosby Deaton returned to his home congregation as the parish's first associate pastor in 1955.

Christ Church's reputation in the city-at-large spread because of the weekly broadcast of the 11:00 a.m. worship service and Dr. Deaton's other frequent appearances on radio and, later, on television. He led the fight in 1953 to eliminate the sale of alcoholic beverages on Sundays near churches after charging that patrons of five taverns in the area of Charles and Hill Streets had disturbed churchgoers and interfered with the services. Dr. Deaton also served as President of the Council of Churches of Maryland, President of the Board of Higher Education of the United Lutheran Church in America, Chairman of the U.L.C.A.'s Committee on Church Architecture, and President of the Board of the Lutheran Inner Mission Society of Baltimore (forerunner of Lutheran Social Services).

Termites precipitated the next great change in the physical facilities of Christ Church. These destructive insects were discovered in the floors of the old church building as early as the days of World War II, when one of the many servicemen housed by the congregation was unpleasantly surprised as his foot went through the lecture room floor! A structural analysis later revealed that the roof was less than 50% of the strength required by the Baltimore City Code and that the entire 100-year old building was being supported by the new parish house and the organ chamber. Even the box in the cornerstone of the building was a sopping-wet mass. It was found that the building could not be made into a sound structure without a complete rebuilding from the foundation up. Even this would not provide a first-floor church large enough to accommodate more than one-fourth of the congregation or the necessary room for an expanded Sunday School program. In addition, the church was hot in the summer, had a low, oppressive ceiling, crumbling and stained plaster, and hard, uncomfortable pews.



Dr. John L. Deaton

Clearly a new building was needed, but the site of the Greater Christ Church was the subject of much debate. Some members of the church suggested that the congregation move to the suburbs where a large number of members lived. Others felt that Christ Church should merge with another downtown Lutheran congregation. A few shuddered at the thought of building a new church edifice on Hill Street, saying, "It is a waste of money," or "I cannot approve of such a ridiculous move in these days and in this neighborhood."

Dr. Deaton responded by writing,

> *"Let no one say that our location is not good. That has always been our excuse for doing nothing. The unique thing about our church, and that which makes it the 'talk' of our city and the whole church, is that we maintain our strength and give such an effective witness in this location. If we ever leave here, we shall be just another 'run-of-the-mill' church and only about one-third our present strength. God placed us here, prospered us here, and wants us to remain here. We can be a much greater church than we now are if we stop making excuses and put our hands and hearts and pocketbooks to the task that God has given us to do."*

This the people of Christ Church did! In 1955 the congregation conducted a capital funds appeal for the new church with a goal of $250,000 to be contributed over a three-year period. When all the pledges were counted, they totaled $463,615 —almost twice the goal. Groundbreaking took place in October 1955, and, although construction was beset by delays, the dedication service for the new edifice was held on May 18, 1958.

The new limestone-trimmed brick building included a ground floor air-conditioned church seating 1,028, the pastors' sacristy, a working sacristy, a large classroom (now used by the Men's Bible Class), a small kitchen, and a new church parlor. In the basement were a recreation room with complete kitchen, storage and shower facilities, and choir practice and robing rooms. Three classrooms, one of which became the church library, and a sound system control room completed the second floor plan.

Beautiful stained-glass windows depicting both Old and New Testament themes were installed. The great Christus Gloriosus window was placed over the altar in memory of Dr. Zimmerman, and a large rose window was at the north end of the sanctuary. This new church building, completed at a total cost of more than one million dollars, was the only religious building of any kind to be built in Baltimore's inner city for over 50 years. Less than three years after its dedication, the congregation was again debt-free.

Interior of Christ Church, 1958-present

The physical facilities of the church were further enhanced with the erection in 1958 of a 16-bell carillon in a steel tower near the rear entrance. Mr. Frank Hubbard has served faithfully as carillonneur since it was put into operation.

Had Dr. Deaton lived three more months, he would have presided at the burning of the mortgage of the new building. The time and energy expended by Dr. Deaton on the Christ Church building project had taken their toll. In the fall of 1960, he was ordered to the hospital for a complete rest. His last message to the people he served so well was in the form of the annual Thank Offering appeal. He ended the letter with, "God does His best for us. Let us always do our best for Him." On November 8, 1960, this servant of the Lord who truly did his best was called to his eternal rest.

Dr. Deaton was appreciated and recognized as a strong leader and effective pastor many times during the more than 26 years he served Christ Church. He received numerous awards and citations from both civic and religious groups. The words of Christ Church members, however, best reveal what he meant to the congregation:

"Dr. Deaton was such a comfort to me and was always there when I needed him."

"A great leader for so many years. A great architect of the church."

"A strong administrator, an excellent preacher, and a dedicated servant of Christianity."

"A builder who possessed an excellent knowledge of architecture."

"A wonderful, kind, and considerate person."

16-bell carillon

The task of ministering to the needs of the almost 2,000 widely-scattered parishioners fell to the new assistant pastor, the Rev. Rodney A. Gatzke, who, with the help of several lay people and ministerial sons, led the congregation for one year until a new senior pastor was called and who remained on until 1962 as assistant pastor.

In October 1961, Dr. Warren C. Johnson, a native of Schenectady, New York, and a former pastor of Second Lutheran Church in Baltimore and Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions of the United Lutheran Church in America, began his ministry as pastor. An excellent and popular preacher with a warm Christian personality and a deep spiritual concern for those he served, Dr. Johnson presented to Christ Church the possibilities of wider service in the community and throughout the greater Baltimore area. In this work, he was ably assisted by Pastors J. Brooks Moore (1962-1964) and Russell M. Long (1963-1965). In 1964, the thirteenth ministerial son of the congregation, Mr. Ralph Welsh, graduated from seminary and was ordained.

During Dr. Johnson's tenure, confirmation instruction was extended to three years, the children's choirs were consolidated into junior and intermediate groups, and children's chapel services regularly attracted a large number of young worshipers. Luther League meetings were switched to Friday and Saturday evenings, and annual weekend retreats for teenagers (first at Camp Jolly Acres, then at Mar-Lu-Ridge) continued. Record hops led to the establishment of a weekly teen center on Friday evenings. The Boy Scout program was reorganized, and there were several attempts to reactivate a Girl Scout troop which had not been in operation since the 1930s.

Dr. Warren C. Johnson

Some changes in Christ Church were caused by the merger of four national Lutheran bodies. The congregation adopted a new constitution in which it dropped the word "English" from its name. This was done primarily because all but one Lutheran church in Baltimore were by this time English-speaking, no longer making this a distinguishing characteristic of the congregation. The United Lutheran Church Women and the Ladies' Society were merged into one women's organization, the Lutheran Church Women, with several small groups meeting at various times during the day and evening. Another change called for by the new constitution was the stipulation that all money collected must be through freewill offerings. Therefore, commercial events, such as the sour beef and oyster suppers, were discontinued. The new constitution also reduced membership on the Church Council from 36 to 15 members, each serving a term of three years, with church officers elected annually.

Outreach programs which were initiated included a Sunday School class especially designed for young married couples, a bus route throughout neighboring communities to bring people to church, and the restructuring of the District Leaders and Telephone Committee, charged with contacting every member of the parish to encourage greater attendance and participation in church life. The annual congregational Christmas get-together also began during this period.

Dr. Johnson resigned, effective in June of 1964, and Pastor Long served as interim pastor until a new senior minister was called in 1965. The new pastor of Christ Church was Dr. Carl W. Folkemer, the fifth in a long line of ministerial sons of the congregation who have served the parish well in many capacities. As a ministerial son, Dr. Folkemer understood the history, accomplishments, spirit, and needs of the congregation. He accepted its call, realizing, as he said, that underneath was "the help of the everlasting arms," and he was installed on June 6, 1965. Dr. Folkemer had served St. John's Lutheran Church in Linthicum for 23 years, taught church history at the Lutheran Deaconess School, and was on the Board of Directors of Lutheran Social Services of Maryland. As a Reformation scholar, he had translated a portion of Martin Luther's works from Latin into English.

Dr. Carl W. Folkemer

In the late 1960s, the congregation became involved in a wider range of social service programs such as a neighborhood club; a day camp at which music, drama, art, recreation, and dancing were offered to children in grades 1-12; and community carnivals and Halloween parties, all under the direction of Mr. and Mrs. Jules Zabawa. A teen center, organized and run by the young people of the church under adult supervision, drew both neighborhood youth and church members. As a part of a cooperative program with the Saints Stephen and James' congregation, Mr. Matthew Ernst coordinated a neighborhood social ministries project, helping to lay the foundation for greater opportunities in this area in the years to come.

Meals-On-Wheels also came to Christ Church during Dr. Folkemer's pastorate. This program involves preparing and distributing a hot and cold meal five days a week to shut-ins across the southern area of Baltimore City and northern Anne Arundel County.

Assistant or associate pastors serving with distinction during Dr. Folkemer's tenure were the Rev. W. Phillip Fogarty, Dr. Edward S. Goetz, the Rev. Justus Liesmann, the Rev. Thomas P. Williamsen, and the Rev. Robert H. Mack. In 1972, Mr. Robert N. Maddox, Jr., became the most recent son of the congregation to be ordained into the gospel ministry. Mrs. Rosabelle Timm was assistant church secretary during the 1970s, and after Miss Zumbrun retired as secretary in 1981, the secretarial work was done by Mrs. Gloria Nickles and Mrs. Mary Lou Cavaselis. Currently, Mrs. Nancy Charitonuk, assisted by Mrs. Roberta Yost, serve with great effectiveness as the congregation's secretaries.

The worship life of the congregation was greatly enriched in 1977 by the institution of weekly services of intercessory prayer and spiritual healing every Tuesday morning. The music program was also strengthened under the leadership of Carl Schroeder, Ruth Haefka, and Paul Davis, who served at various times as organists or directors of music. The Christ Church Concert Association was formed in the 1970s to sponsor several outstanding musical events each year, including concerts by the Christ Church Choir and instrumental soloists.

The biggest thrust in the field of social ministry began in 1965 with the formation of the Greater Christ Church Committee to make a thorough study of the pressing physical and spiritual needs in the Baltimore area and to identify ways that the congregation could help meet them. For almost 80 years, Christ Church had brought strength, comfort, and hope to its own community of believers and to others by the radio broadcast. Now, however, through large sums of money and an enormous amount of time and energy, the church was to expand its ministry to help meet the housing and medical needs of people without regard to religion, creed, color, or station in life — a project which was heralded across the country as a unique and outstanding venture by an individual congregation.

After extensive negotiations for funding with city, state, and federal governmental agencies, the Christ Church Complex was proposed. The plan included a medical center named after the third pastor of the church, Dr. John L. Deaton, and affiliated with University Hospital to provide quality medical and nursing care; an apartment building for low and moderate income elderly people and disabled adults of any age; a beautiful plaza; and an underground garage.

When this tremendous project was placed before the congregation, the members responded by adopting a resolution approving the concept and authorizing that planning of the facility and a capital funds appeal begin. After a feasibility study, a professional fundraising consultant told the Church Council that realistically church members would contribute about $250,000 over a three-year period for the project. "If somehow," the consultant said, "you can really inspire the congregation, they might conceivably give $350,000, but don't count on it." A third figure, $425,000, was added in the way that a negotiator asks for $100,000 in the hope of getting $10,000. When the three years were up, the congregation had pledged $419,000, but actually had given $470,000. At the end of five years, the total contributions reached almost three-quarters of a million dollars, all for a project to serve not only our own constituency but the community-at-large as well.

Entrance to John L. Deaton Hospital and Medical Center

In his anniversary sermon of 1971, Dr. Folkemer attributed this amazing feat to God's love:

> *"The glory and the praise belong first to God. With God, all things are possible. All God needs is a man, a woman, a child, a congregation that is responsive to His grace and power and love. We are the stewards of His grace. All that is needed is that we be found faithful. If all we attempt to do... conforms to His will and uses His grace, we can never fail."*

In April of 1969, houses on Hill Street across from the church were demolished, the first house to be torn down that of a lifelong member. Within three-and-one-half years, the John L. Deaton Medical Center opened, containing 220 beds and a renal dialysis unit to treat patients with kidney disease. The $6.1 million Christ Church Harbor Apartments opened in 1974 with 288 one bedroom and efficiency apartments, each with a balcony facing the redeveloped Inner Harbor or the Christ Church Plaza. An underground parking garage and a beautifully landscaped plaza and fountain completed the complex. The Deaton Center, the first building to be opened in the Charles Center Harbor I Project, is now a centerpiece of a nationally-known urban redevelopment program. In addition to the seed money raised for planning and the initial land acquisition, members of Christ Church participated in the project through the furnishing of Deaton Center rooms in honor or in memory of loved ones.

Other highlights of church life during Dr. Folkemer's pastorate included the continuing financial support of Dr. Rodger M. Singer as a missionary to Hong Kong and the yearly firemen's memorial service held to commemorate public servants who had given their lives to protect others. The Sunday School instituted a new married couples' class, reactivated the church library, held communion breakfasts for teenagers, and conducted spirited contests to boost weekly attendance. The Hill Street Players produced several lavish stage presentations in the Fellowship Hall including "The King and I," "Annie Get Your Gun," "South Pacific," and "The Sound of Music." A weekly amateur wrestling instruction program was popular among teenage boys for many years during the 1960s. Christ Church was also the site of the Maryland Synod Conventions in 1960 and 1975, and the church extended its community outreach further through active participation in the South Baltimore Emergency Relief agency and the Coalition of Peninsula Organizations.

Christ Church Harbor Apartments

In early 1982, Dr. Folkemer submitted his letter of retirement, to become effective May 31. Christ Church's first "homegrown" senior pastor, Dr. Folkemer is proud to point out that he was baptized by the first pastor, Dr. Zimmerman, confirmed by the second pastor, Dr. Blackwelder, and married by the third pastor, Dr. Deaton. In his 17 years as the leader of the congregation, Dr. Folkemer was first and always a pastor to his people. He preached the gospel with energy and forcefulness, leading the church into its dynamic social ministry program to the sick and elderly. Dr. Folkemer is a person of vision and an outstanding pastor of the Lutheran church.

In a letter to the congregation in 1982, Dr. Folkemer said:

> *"Christ Church was largely instrumental in my acceptance of the call to the ministry many years ago. The spiritual warmth, love, and inspiration I received at the 'Church You Can't Forget' during the very formative years of my life and that of my family played a very large part in my decision to enter the ministry. . . . I am grateful that God has permitted me to close my active pastoral ministry in the very congregation where I was spiritually nourished and in the congregation that has been such a great spiritual influence on my whole family."*

Associate Pastor Robert H. Mack ably administered the affairs of the congregation for eight months until a new senior pastor was called. On January 24, 1983, the Rev. John R. Sabatelli, a native of New York City, became the sixth pastor of the congregation, promising to continue to "lift high the cross of Christ" as the congregation approached its second century. Christ Church, Baltimore, is the third church bearing the same name served by Pastor Sabatelli (the others being in Wantagh and Islip Terrace, New York). In addition to his pastoral responsibilities prior to coming to Baltimore, he was the director for stewardship for the Metropolitan New York Synod.

The Rev. John R. Sabatelli

Under Pastor Sabatelli's leadership, the congregation is building on the existing ministries to the sick and elderly. The Deaton Hospital and Medical Center is constructing a 120-bed, $15,000,000 addition. A host of new programs and activities have started in the last few years to appeal to individuals with a wide variety of needs and interests. Among these programs are the following:

- A singles ministry for people of all ages;
- A rejuvenated youth group;
- A young married couples club (for those under 45);
- An older married couples club (for those over 45);
- A senior citizens group;
- A group for families;
- Physical fitness programs;
- Parenting programs;
- An adult forum addressing topics of interest to Christians in the world of today.

Many of these programs are coordinated by a full-time program director, Miss Kimerly Bond, who began her work at Christ Church in the fall of 1983.

The worship life of the congregation has been enriched through a more frequent celebration of Holy Communion, the greater participation of lay people in the worship services as lectors and communion assistants, the addition of children's sermons, and special festival services (with outstanding music by the choirs and musical instrumentalists) on Christmas, Easter, Ascension, and Pentecost.

To enhance the utility and physical beauty of the church, much of the interior was recently repainted, and an elevator was installed so that all members and friends might participate in activities on the second floor. A loop amplification system was placed in the sanctuary for those using hearing aids, and some entrances were redesigned with handicap-access ramps.

Meanwhile, many long-standing activities of the church continue, such as the Sunday Church School, dynamic music programs, Tuesday healing services, Meals-On-Wheels, the bowling league, Lutheran Church Women, the Hill Street Players, the Mother-and-Daughter and Father-and-Son Banquets, youth retreats, and a Lenten midweek program including supper, study, and worship. In addition, there has been a steady increase in financial contributions during the last few years.

There is a new spirit of enthusiasm among the members of Christ Church, a joy of serving in a congregation with such a rich history, an excitement of being in the center of one of the most beautiful harbor development projects in the country, and an anticipation of the future work that needs to be done and can be done by dedicated individuals.

The reader has no doubt noted that the only names mentioned in this history were members of the church staff over the years. The real history of Christ Church, however, is not only the story of distinguished staff members, as important as they have been. The real history of this congregation is the work in Christ's name done by the lay members of the parish. The church is people, and it has been the people of Christ Church who have carried on its witness so effectively. To name some workers and not name all, whether the contribution was large or small, would have been to leave out a servant of God. Those who are familiar with this great history can insert the names of the dedicated lay leaders who have had a part in each glorious decade. Indeed, all members and friends of Christ Church can emblazon their own names somewhere in these pages.

For YOU are the one who:

- Worships regularly;
- Supports the church financially so that it can minister at home and abroad;
- Serves on boards and committees;
- Attends programs, classes, and activities on a regular basis;
- Prepares for or helps lead worship services;
- Volunteers to help in one of the many congregational programs aiding others in need;
- Enjoys the fellowship of Christian brothers and sisters through many social activities.

YOU are Christ Church.

Near the end of his pastorate, Dr. Zimmerman wrote, "As we think of Christ Church's wonderful past history, its present great work, and its future glorious possibilities and as we think of the joy of service and the blessing of such dedicated service, we ask, 'Has it paid?' and we believe you will say, 'Yes, it has paid!' "

As Christ Church enters its second century, the congregation rededicates itself to be a good and faithful steward of the gifts that have been entrusted to it and to go "from strength to strength" in the Lord's service.